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ABSTRACT

Of the 10 million Mexican Americans in the United States, 90% reside in the southwestern states of California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Historically, the acquisition of Spanish speaking citizens by the U.S. has resulted from military conquest. Yet, Mexican Americans did not have a significant political voice until the high fatality rate of Mexican Americans in World War II prompted the formation of the American G.I. Forum and the League of United Latin American Citizens. Both groups have served as vehicles for expression of numerous Mexican American concerns and issues. The economic, social and educational levels of this population are "shockingly" low. Most Chicanos do not have the training and background to obtain good paying jobs. Thus the Chicanos' economic level is a reflector of the educational structure. Social discrimination, stemming from an ethnocentric attitude, prevails despite legal sanctions guaranteeing equal opportunities. The Chicano movement is slowly changing this; but it is a slow process. Both the Catholic and Protestant churches are also beginning to take a larger role in "El Movimiento". A new religious renaissance is spreading, emphasizing self-assertion, indigenous leadership and a pluralistic spirit of existence. The Chicano's philosophy of education is currently being re-defined to emphasize internal examination of one's self-worth and to provide a specific set of values which provide orientation toward the individual viewed as independent of external measures. (Author/NQ)

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# MEXICAN-AMERICANS IN THE SOUTHWEST

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MEXICAN-AMERICANS IN THE SOUTHWEST

Mexican-Americans comprise the second largest group of ethnic minorities in the United States and the largest minority in the Southwest. There are approximately ten million "Mexican-Americans" in the United States, 90 per cent of whom reside in five southwestern states--California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The economic, social and educational levels of this population are shockingly low.

Historically, the acquisition of Spanish-speaking citizens by the United States has resulted from military conquest. The Texas War of Independence in 1836, the Mexican War of 1846-1848 and the Spanish-American War of 1898 left little or no choice to former Mexican and Spanish-speaking people but to accept U.S. citizenship. Under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which concluded the Mexican War, Mexico lost over one-half its total land area; today the five southwestern states where most of the Mexican-American population lives once was part of Mexico. This area is frequently referred to by Chicanos as "occupied America" or Northern Aztlan--an identification with the "old" country of Mexico. The United States government paid Mexico $15 million and assumed claims against Mexico by United States citizens amounting to an additional $3 million. Formerly-Mexican citizens had a decision of "returning" to their native country or to retain their land and property in a "new" country under a "foreign" judicial code. Somewhat reluctantly, United States citizens accepted this new and "different" people as part of the "price" for the massive land acquisition.

Political Conditions

The price paid by the new "citizens" was massive prejudice, discrimination and segregation. Conditions today are described by Jorge Lara-Braud, director of the Hispanic Institute at the University of Texas, who charges that:

> The powerlessness of the Mexican-American is not accidental. It is the direct result of a social system that penalizes difference and rewards conformity. To be blunt, the social, educational, economic, political and ecclesiastical structures of the state are rigidly Anglo-oriented and Anglo-controlled. This may look natural, but it is very dangerous. Under the present circumstances a Mexican-American or the member of any other ethnic minority succeeds to the extent that he becomes or appears to be a replica of at least a middle-class Anglo Texan. Until that norm is met, one remains in the category of sub-people or non-people. This explains the frequency of such descriptivephrases as the "Mexican-American problem," "the Mexican-American's cultural gap," or the "Mexican-American's language barrier." The measuring rod implied lies outside the Mexican-American community itself. Instead, it is applied from outside, by the powerful dominant group.[1]

Not until the high fatality-rate of Mexican-Americans in World War II prompted formation of the American G.I. Forum and LULAC (League of United Latin-American Citizens) did Mexican-Americans have a significant political voice. While both groups are considered to be politically moderate, they have served as vehicles for expression of numerous Mexican-American concerns and issues. Nationally-significant advances for Mexican-Americans did not occur until the Kennedy Administration, when several Chicanos were appointed to national offices. The Johnson Administration proclaimed LULAC week, the first national recognition accorded a Mexican-American organization; during the Kennedy and Johnson years, bilingual education became a possibility.

Probably the best-known Chicano political leader is Cesar Chavez, who achieved national attention in the fall of 1965 when he lead a strike of Filipino and Mexican-American farm workers against grape growers in the San Joaquin Valley of California.

His United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (later a division of AFL-CIO) successfully negotiated eleven contracts with major wine grape growers; to combat Chavez' success, growers of table grapes traded over 100 brands among themselves to prevent any single grower from boycott; Chavez had little choice but to declare a national boycott against all California table grape growers. Lara-Braud describes Chavez' dedication and importance to the Chicano movement:

> Chavez' struggle as a symbol of redress for the Spanish-speaking cannot be over-estimated. He has challenged practically every U.S. power and principality inimical to their self-determination. Hence, his name, picture, union banner and slogans make their appearance in every other struggle of the Spanish-speaking: rural and urban strikes, efforts for collective bargaining, demands for bilingual education, voter registration drives, restraint of biased law enforcement agencies, proportional representation in juries, draft and school boards, exclusion of cheal (legal) "commuter" labor from Mexico, covering of farm workers under the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (from which they have been specifically excluded), non-discriminatory practices in general employment and promotions, and an end to the excessively large numbers of Spanish-speaking youth drafted for service in Vietnam.[2]

The following year the Unidas Conference met with several political leaders from Washington; this was an important initial step in presenting Chicano issues to Washington.

Traditionally Chicanos have supported the Democratic Party. In Texas, Chicanos founded their own political party--La Raza Unida Party, as a reaction to the lack of receptiveness of the state's Democratic party. Unfortunately the La Raza Unida party in Texas will probably have difficulty since the gubernatorial candidate in 1972 and 1974, Ramsey Muniz, has been indicted for drug offenses; but La Raza succeeded in placing several Chicanos on local school boards and city commissions in several Texas states. More importantly, they demonstrated that a political system can be <u>made</u> to listen to a minority of voters when those voters work together.

Economic conditions

It is important to note the interdependence of economic status with the educational and social status of the Chicano. To obtain good paying jobs Chicanos must have marketable skills, which are sought by the American system; most Chicanos do not have such training and background. Thus the Chicanos economic level is a reflector of the educational structure. Social discrimination, stemming from an ethnocentric attitude, prevails despite legal sanctions guaranteeing equal opportunities. Due to misconceptions, inaccurate information and stereotypes, many Americans believe Chicanos are naturally inferior and have no talents except cooking, bullfighting and/or drinking tequilla. Unfortunately, many Americans still instill these attitudes in their children and, since there is lack of accurate cultural information available, the child may well grow up with these derogatory attitudes ingrained. But the Chicano movement is slowly changing these stereotypes; but it is a slow process; currently Chicanos are economically discriminated against, which in turn deprives them of equal job opportunities.

Government statistics used in this analysis in many instances do not accurately reflect the Mexican-American's economic situation. Categorization of statistics is misleading; in some cases "Mexican-Americans" are directly categorized, but in other reports the category "Spanish" is used. "Spanish" includes not only Mexican-Americans, but also Puerto Rican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Central or South Americans and other Spanish-Americans. Therefore, these statistics are not truly accurate in reflecting Mexican-American percentages overall.

Since there is an ethnic grouping of Spanish origin, the

Chicano falls within these statistics. Thus the following are used only when Mexican-Americans were enumerated specifically. 1975 low-income status of all families with head of Spanish origin, by type of Spanish origin, for the U.S. reveal that one out of every four Chicano families falls below the poverty level. In comparison to the total number of families with head of Spanish origin, the figures are "Mexican-American one out of every four; total Spanish--one of every eleven." Except for the Puerto Ricans, Chicanos have more families subsisting below the official poverty level than any other ethnic group.

The 1976 category of Broad Occupation Group of employed persons of Spanish origins 16 years old and over reveal that Chicano men are employed primarily as blue-collar workers; the next largest category is white-collar workers, then service workers, and then farm workers. Chicana women are employed largely as white-collar workers, followed by blue-collar workers and service workers and last as farm workers. In comparing the sexes, Chicano males are employed more as blue-collar and farm workers than females; Chicana females are employed as white-collar and service workers more often than are males. Overall, almost twice as many males as females belong to the working force.

The unemployment rate in March 1975 for persons of Spanish origin was 3.6% higher than the unemployment rate for the total civilian labor force. One-half million unemployed were of Spanish origin; one-half of this number (one-quarter million) were Chicanos.

The March 1976 Employment Status and major occupation group for the Spanish-origin population 16 years of age and older statistics reveal that: 79.4% of all Chicano males and 49.3% of Chicana females were in the labor force. 14.0% of all Chicana women and 10.5% of all Chicano males were unemployed. In terms of specific jobs,

Chicano men held the following jobs in greatest numbers:

Operatives, including transport--29%
craft and kindred workers--------19.1%
laborers, excluding farm---------14.3%
service workers, excluding private households
-------10.9%
farm laborers and supervisors---- 7.8%
managers and administrators------ 5.6% (excluding farm)
professional, technical, kindred- 5.5%
clerical and kindred workers----- 4.9%
sales workers-------------------- 2.1%
farmers & farm managers---------- 0.6%

Chicana women held the following jobs most frequently:

Clerical and kindred workers------30.1%
operatives, including transport---22.3%
service workers except private households
-------20.8%
professional, technical, kindred-- 6.0%
private household workers--------- 5.5%
sales workers-------------------- 4.8%
managers and administrative, except farm
------- 3.2%
craft and kindred workers--------- 3.0%
farm laborers and supervisors----- 2.5%
laborers, excluding farm---------- 1.7%
farmers and farm managers--------- 0.1%

Statistics concerning 1975 income for Chicanos 14 years of age and older revealed that Mexican-American male median income was $6,450. However 39% of Chicano male workers earned below the $5,000 level, while 1.2% earned $25,000 or more. Chicana women median income was $2,750; but 75.2% earned less than $5,000 and o.1% earned $25,000 or more. One further statistic bears emphasis: the average income for the American working male was $12,400.

Overall, one of every four Chicano families falls below the federal poverty level, as compared with one of every eleven Spanish families. Chicano men are employed mainly as blue-collar and white-collar workers, while Chicana women are mainly employed as white-collar and blue-collar workers. As of March 1975, 250,000 Mexican-Americans were unemployed. Chicano men held operatives, craft, general labor and service work types of jobs

most often; Chicana women held clerical, operative, service work and professional/technical types of jobs most often. The average American male earned $12,400 median salary, as compared with $6,450 median salary for Chicano males and $2,750 for Chicana females. These statistics cleraly show that the average Chicano is not in good financial condition or employment status. But before economic status can improve significantly, it appears educational conditions must improve dramatically.

Social Conditions

Proximity to the homeland of Mexico, and to the region of the Southwestern United States, has made it much easier for Mexican-Americans to continue their cultural traditions, despite the attempts of a dominant society to force assimilation. Historically, Mexican-Americans have had less motivation to assimilate than most other ethic minorities who have relocated in the U.S. Acoording to Barrera, Munoz and Ornelas, the rejection of cultural assimilation is based upon:

> their belief in the value of the Chicano culture and a desire to see it according to its own internal logic, . . . their distaste for cultural homogenization and a regard for human diversity, . . . a feeling that assimilation for most would involve the trading of genuine human culture for a bland dehumanized, consumer-oriented made in America culture.[3]

This specific type of value-orientation has been confused quite generally as cultural pride, which is but one facet of the concept of Chicanismo. "Chicanismo" refers to a philosophy of life, shared primarily by Chicanos, especially those involved in "the movement." The feeling of disatisfaction with Anglo culture is not a reaction to a larger society, but might more accurately be considered a counter-culture. The philosophy of Chicanismo has two orientations. The first orientation is the materialistic

philosophy through which one measures his self-worth externally; the underlying premise is that people may not be "good" in and of themselves, consequently an individual's "goodness" is measured by external manifestations such as money, status and power. The second orientation is internal and reflects the continual spiritual self-examination. This "inner" life is essential to define the worth of one's self and others.

In a broad sense, the cultural revolution is meant to free the individual from the restrictive philosophy of status according to title, financial status or influence in the community. In examining a Chicano student within the environment of an Anglo classroom it is important to remember that the concept of competition with others is contrary to Chicanismo.

The Chicano's tendency to view himself and others according to his definition of "worth" depends upon his cultural values and customs. While the Anglo society typically promotes the values of competition within the public schools, in the Mexican-American culture being is more important than getting or achieving. The consciousness level is at the "here and now," which means total involvement in the present. The traditional siestas in Mexico represent one of the most often misinterpreted behaviors within the parent "Mexican" culture: the siesta goes beyond relief from mid-day heat and drudgery of a workday, it reminds the individual that striving for economic advancement should not dictate his lifestyle to the extent that he can't take time out to realize the "here and now" of life. Tomas Martinez emphasizes the point in noting that Mexican businessmen are frequently more concerned with adjusting personal relations than in operating efficiently, especially when compared with Anglo businessmen.[4]

Not only is misinterpretation frequent outside one's culture,

it also exists within subcultures. The word "Chicano" within the Mexican-American culture is a word which is frequently misinterpreted. The definition originally was used to identify a low-class Mexican who was struggling for economic survival within the barrio. Many upper and middle-class Mexican-Americans refuse to use the term because of its origin and its implication of militancy. But most Mexican-Americans within the lower socio-economic classes consider the word a reflection of their values, beliefs, customs and traditions. It is used not only to define their culture, but also as a means of retaliation against the dominant--and domineering--society. The negative connotations of the word "Chicano" mean to gain pride and self-respect within the barrio. From the word "Chicano" the concept of "Chicanismo" evolved; Chicanismo is an evolving philosophy which includes an alternative set of values as contrasted with the Anglo society. Some concepts within Chicanismo are idealistic, but nevertheless they have been incorporated into the Mexican-American culture.

With this developing confidence in culture, new programs have emerged. A movement of national significance has to have national common denominators and visible signs of identification. The first of these common denominators is that the movement, within the national framework, is in the hands of Chicano youth. According to the March 1976 Census, the median age of Mexican-Americans is 20.9 as compared with the total U.S. median age of 27.9.

Cesar Chavez was the first Chicano activist to receive national attention when he led a non-violent strike of Filipino and Mexican-American farm workers against grape growers in the San Joaquin Valley of California: this was in the fall of 1965. The Federal Alliance of Free City States was formed by activist Reis Lopez Tijerina to reclaim millions of acres of land in northern New

Mexico and southern Colorado, land which had allegedly been taken in violation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In October 1967 over six hundred Chicanos settled in the Kit Carson National Forest and declared the establishment of the "free city-state of San Joaquin del Rio de Charma," with Tijerina as "proctor." When twelve members of the group were arrested, Tijerina lead the infamous "raid" on the courthouse at Tierra Amarilla.[5]

In viewing the current Chicano student civil rights movement, it is easy to become so involved with the dramatic demonstrations that one confuses the necessity for planning, unification, systematic and persisten activity for educational and social changes. This is often the traditionalist's justification for non-active and non-commital attitudes. The rhetoric of "El Movimiento" was designed to incite Chicano activism and inform Anglos that Mexican-Americans will no longer allow themselves to be controlled by others. Pressure-group tactics are used against the dominant culture's institutions, designed to activate a more sensitive approach to the dealings of Chicano needs.

Religion

The impact of organized religions within the Chicano cultures has been limited but much needed. Unlike the black movement, the religous community has remained relatively inactive in non-promotion or endorsement of the struggles of Chicanos against the dominant society. The major reason for this behavior can only be deduced by examining the history of the Christian religions' involvement with Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.

As Jorge Lara-Braud notes, both Catholic and Protestant missionaries had two goals in mind when they moved into the Chicano culture. One was to provide spiritual enlightenment; the other was to promote

Americanization. It was, and still is, thought that the dominant culture's language, values and traditions must be adopted and learned if "new citizens" were to become productive and content. Thus religious organizations committed themselves to the conversion of the Mexicans not only spiritually, but culturally as well. The Church has enlisted the concept of ethnocentrism to "teach" the "Anglo" culture to Mexican-Americans.[6]

It must be remembered that the Mexican religious background is one of paganism and not Christianity. The Spanish conquest of Mexico brought the Christian religion, and the resultant conversion of the natives. However when the Catholic and Protestant churches placed assimilation on their priority list, they were agents of the state--not of God. Thus we can now understand why the church has not been the nucleus for cultural or social life and/or change even though the goal of Americanization was generally successful.

Today the churches, both Catholic and Protestant, are beginning to take a larger role in "El Movimiento." A new religious renaissance is spreading, emphasizing self-assertion; indigenous leadership and a pluralistic spirit of existence. The self-assertiveness has been sorely needed for Chicanos. Since the educational, social and political arenas of life have impeded the Chicano's progress, the Church was in reality the last organization where the Chicano could seel self-improvement. Granted that this emphasis has been late in coming, at least it is finally developing. The indigenous leadership is also a positive emphasis. Historically, because they were not of Mexican origin, the identification with the clergy has been minimal. But if more Chicanos become involved with the Church at important, decision-making and spiritually-guiding positions, more Chicanos will probably become involved with Church affairs; this should make the Church

stronger and therefore more effective in supporting "la causa." Lara-Braud cites statistics which reveal that even though 95% of Chicanos say they are Catholic, only 20% are active in church affairs and/or services. If that 20% figure could be increased, the Church and "El Movimiento" both should profit. The pluralistic approach recognizes that a respect and dignity for all cultures must be maintained. In this regard, there is no reason for one culture to attempt to dominate and impose values, norms, traditions etc. upon another culture. This type of attitude then reveals that the Church has made a definite move away from the previous goal of Americanization and assimilation. One especially promising occurrence has been the recent appointment of the first Chicano bishop in San Antonio, Texas. When Father Patrick Flores took over the diocese, changes began. More Chicanos are attending church services and functions, and the Church is responding. Bishop Flores has established an Archdiocesan office for Mexican-American Affairs; there is a strong probability of establishing a national center for the study of pastoral apostolate among Mexican-Americans. These efforts have indigenous leadership. As mentioned earlier, the lack of national leadership has hurt the Chicano movement; if the Church directs more Chicanos in their struggle for equality, a powerful new resource for leadership has been developed.

PADRES (Padres Asociado para Derechas Religiosas, Educativas y Sociales) is a tremendously potential source of leadership for "la Chicanada." Being the strongest voice for the overall advancement of "el Chicano" within the Catholic Church, this group is now participating at all levels of decision-making and may be able to exert influence outside of religious matters.

Parallel organizations in Protestant religions do exist, and

are becoming stronger. The Mexican-American Protestant caucus among the United Methodists, American Baptists, United Presbyterians and the Southern Presbyterians are searching for more members and more influence to join in advancement of Chicanos. In essence, the new Chicano religious renaissance is occurring because of cooperation between Catholic and Protestant churches, a relatively new development within the Chicano culture. Ecumenical solidarity with the quest for advancement of Chicanos as a top priority must be one of the strongest forces in the arsenal for achieving social equality. However the Church still has a long way to go in its efforts to become a strong and positive resource for supplying leadership and direction for Chicanos. Because of past inadequate relationshops between the Church and Chicanos, this renaissance will take time to become effective. For this renaissance is a rebirth of a special spirituality which joins church life with the Chicanismo spirit of self-assertion. The Church is an important resource which "El Movimiento" cannot do without. The need for increased coordination and the obligation of church resources is a necessary condition for the Church to supply more direction, strategy and guidance. Chicanismo will be much stronger with the Church as an ally.

Education

The Chicano's philosophy of education is currently being re-defined to emphasize internal examination of one's self-worth and to provide a specific set of values which provide orientation toward the individual viewed as independent of external measures. In regard to the individual, the inner-life is vital for spiritual and non-materialistic fulfillment. The external philosophy emphasizes the measurement of one's self-worth and self-esteem

through the accumulation of material achievements. This principle stems from the "Protestant Ethic" which has dominated American social and educational institutions. The tendency to use Anglo customs, attitudes and expectations as a comparative standard has been a common problem for Chicanos in the struggle for meaningful education. The explanation of cultural variance in philosophies as well as attitudes is ethnocentrism, a term defined by Samovar and Porter as:

> A tendency to view people unconsciously by using our own group and our own customs as the standard for all judgments. We place ourselves, or racial, ethnic, or social group, at the center of the universe and rate all others accordingly. The greater their similarity to us, the nearer to us we place them; the greater the dissimilarity, the farther away they are. We place one group above another, one segment of society above another, one nation-state above another. We tend to see our own groups, our own country, our own culture as the best, as the most moral. This view also demands our first loyalty and produces a frame of reference that denies the existence of any other frame of reference. It is an absolute position that prohibits any other position from being appropriate for another culture.[7]

The following analysis will reveal various detrimental effects which this concept of ethnocentrism has perpetuated upon Chicano children.

One of the most personal and arbitrary standards the Anglo set for Chicanos was mastery of the English language. In schools across the country, Spanish-speaking students were punished by teachers and administrators for speaking their "native" language. Those children whose primary language was Spanish really had no reason to use English, especially when conversing with other Spanish-speaking students. Embarrassment, humiliation, rejection and debasement were then a few of the feelings projected upon the Chicano child, all of which perpetuated an attitude of "inferiority" to the child. Such children were placed in a cultural dilemma: if they succumbed to the demands of the school, they

would betray their cultural heritage; on the other hand, if they defied the teachers' edicts, they would be punished again. This situation produced emotional tensions and frustrations. It is understandable that many students harbored feelings of self-doubt about his personal image and worth. Since the student was denied a positive relationship with his teacher, and might infer the teacher did not take a personal interest nor approve of him as a person, the child quickly learned he was to be treated differently than his English-speaking, white schoolmates. Indeed the reason for such treatment lay in the assumption that this student was "different."

Once the Chicano student concluded he was "different," he began to learn his "place" as a second-class student--characterized by slow learning and poor academic performance. These conditions were reinforced by administration of I.Q. and other culturally-biased tests which were not applicable as accurate measures of ability. Despite psychologists and other academicians' warnings that these tests may not have been constructed fairly for minority students, test results were typically used to "prove" deviance of Chicanos (and other minorities) from educational norms. Jorge Lara-Braud writes that Chicano students were thus assigned to classes for "underachievers" and were generally counselled <u>against</u> college-preparatory programs, based upon such test scores. Once more the Chicano student's "place"--below that of the Anglo--was reinforced. Typically the Chicano student saw himself as inadequate and discouraged in his efforts to leave his "inferior" status behind. To make positive attitudes even harder for Chicano identification, schools omitted mention of contributions of Mexican-Americans to U.S. history and society. In doing so, the Chicano knew of few heroes of his own ancestry which could

be used to stimulate ethnic and cultural pride. On the other hand the vast majority of America's heroes were White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs). The educational institutions had placed Chicanos in inferior states and also stripped them of reasonable opportunities to rise "above his place" in life. When all these factors and tactics are seen in a psychological perspective, it is clear that anxiety and apprehension resulted from the educational system which was supposed to encourage and inspire students. One may reasonably infer that an inadequate state of education existed (and exists) to meet Chicano students' needs and aspirations. Social adjustment is complicated by the ethnocentric approach to education. The major result to be fought is the history of ascribed inferiority. Implications of such a concept (inferiority) are extremely detrimental to Chicano students--a negative self-image means the individual finds himself to be inadequate and lacking in dignity. These attitudes in turn manifest themselves in stagnation of personal development, social mobility and economic advancement. Nobleza Asuncion-Lande notes that a precondition for improvement of the self and one's group is a good education; but the American educational system has not met the needs of <u>most</u> Chicano students. There is a definite need for a new emphasis on self-awareness and assertiveness for Chicanos at every level in schools, by admitting that the educational system--not Chicano "inferiority"--is to blame for notions of Chicano inabilities.

A second step must deal with changing the educational approaches in terms of revamped curricula and an appropriate cultural preparation of teachers, to help them more fully understand the Chicano student and culture. One poignant example of what changes are

needed comes from Crystal City, Texas. After a massive student walkout and an intensive voter registration drive, a new ethnic-oriented school board was elected. Several new guidelines were instituted to create a more culturally-aware and accurate educational system. Some new procedures included:

1. bilingual education from kindergarten through the third grade.
2. free breakfast and lunch programs for every student, via federal programs.
3. banning of culturally-biased I.Q. tests and English-proficiency examinations.
4. use of relevant texts in the classroom, even though they were not "state approved."
5. student records were declared to be confidential.
6. more Chicano teachers and counselors were hired.[8]

Underwood, Ferguson and Yeager, in identifying major barriers to equality for black Americans, provide sound ideas for the Chicano situation:

> The lack of educational opportunities compounds the economic deprivation. Blacks [Chicanos in this case] are not qualified for certain jobs because of educational deficiencies and, at the same time younger Blacks [Chicanos] do not acquire job skills because of disillusionment. Low quality educational facilities aggravate this vicous cycle.[9]

It is important to realize that with the improvement of the quality of education, the economic status will also improve. The opposite is also true--thus by improving one facet of the Chicano existence, other aspects will be improved naturally because of the interdependence of education with economics, as well as with social equality and political strength.

At this time it seems appropriate to cite the most recent government statistics concerning the Chicano and the educational system. According to the March 1, 1975 statistics, Mexican-Americans--who constitute 60% of the Hispanic group 25 years of age and older--had eight times more students drop out before completing the fifth grade as compared with the total population of Spanish origin. Within the age bracket from 25 to 29, 6%

of Chicanos dropped out as opposed to .08% of the total Spanish population. This statistic indicates a positive regression of dropouts which is most encouraging within the overall Spanish ethnic group:

| | |
|---|---|
| Age 25-29 | 6.0% |
| Age 30-34 | 12.0% |
| Age 35-44 | 19.7% |
| Age 45-64 | 34.7% |
| Age 65+ | 67.5% |

With regard to persons who completed four years of high school or more, 32.5% of Mexican-Americans did so as compared with 64.1% of the total Spanish population. Approximately one-third of Chicano students graduate from high school! But in analyzing age bracketing, an encouraging trend is developing: of those students now between the ages of 25 and 29, 53.7% graduated from high school as compared with 43.0% of the 30-34 age bracket and 32.2% of the 35 to 44 age bracket. Overall, one-fourth of Mexican-American students never get past a fifth-grade education and only one-third of those left go on to complete four years of high school.

The October 1975 statistics on enrollment status of the population to age 34 reveals significant comparisons between Chicanos and Anglos: of those students enrolled in school below the college level, the percentages were 44.3% for Anglos and 49.6% for Chicanos. Of students enrolled at the college level, the percentages were 8.8% for Anglos and 5.2% for Chicanos. It is clear that a higher percentage of Anglos attend college as compared with Chicanos. In terms of students who have graduated from high school but not enrolled in college, the percentages are 34.1% for Anglos and 17.2% for Chicanos. A higher percentage of Anglos with a college education are not attending college. However perhaps the most revealing statistic is that of individuals <u>without</u> a high school diploma who are not enrolled in school:

this includes 12.8% of Anglos and 28.0% of Chicanos. More than twice the percentage of Chicano non-high school graduates are out of school. Almost one-eighth of Chicano non-high school graduates are not attempting to further their formal education. Overall it is evident that only 5.2% of Chicano high school graduates go to college, and 28% of Chicanos without high school diplomas do not continue their education. The underlying fact is, the educational attainment level of Chicanos is low.

It is logical to assume that without proper mastery of elementary skills further levels of education will be tremendously difficult for the student. When 60% of all Chicanos drop out of school before completion of the fifth grade, they are limited in their abilities to obtain good jobs. Vocational education has frequently been presented as an alternative, but Lara-Braud describes Chicano vocational education in Texas as outmoded and training students with non-marketable skills. Just as vocational training can be as useful as the quality of the training; a good high school education requires a good education at the elementary and junior high schools. Indeed, the need for educational improvement seems paramount; but educational reform is not so easy to implement. Special programs such as Talent Search and Upward Bound have offered Chicano youth encouragement to enter college by providing quality counseling, training and instruction. But these programs deal with only a small percentage of students who can benefit from such approaches. Funding and therefore staffing have steadily decreased in the past five years, while the need for such programs continues to grow. Congress has cut back on educational grants; new programs must compete with established programs for available monies. With increasing competition for fewer funds, it is probable that needed programs will have less

impact. Federal educational grants for minorities have helped many Chicanos go to college; but cut-backs cannot help him leave the barrio with academic skills necessary for survival or success. With these conditions in mind, it is even more important that Chicanos in school now get the best possible education available.

The promotion and establishment of Chicano and/or ethnic studies programs at the university level have become more common. Such programs provide cultural education and awareness which helps many Chicanos become better citizens for themselves and for the society. Arising from the lack of "relevant" educational opportunities, the two major objectives of Chicano Studies programs are cited by Asuncion-Lande as: "1. to develop and reinforce Chicano pride in themselves and in their group. 2. to recruit and prepare responsible leaders among Chicano youth who will be willing to return to their communities to serve their people."[10] These objectives are directly aimed at the problems of degradation and stratification in which the Chicano has lived for so long.

Asuncion-Lande also presents the four special characteristics of the Chicano Studies program. "They are: multidisciplinarity, flexibility, bilingual and bicultural contexts, and orientation toward community service."[11] The wide range of disciplines pertinent to these programs include both intercultural and speech communication courses which are designed to improve human communication not only in the barrio but also between Chicanos and Anglos. In summary, Chicano Studies programs should offer courses emphasizing the Chicano experience in this country. The variety of disciplinarty foci allows flexibility; students may either broaden their educational scope or narrow to specific goals and/or work.

The bilingual/bicultural aspects of Chicano studies enlightens students by making them more culturally aware while simultaneously

becoming more familiar with conversational Spanish and Spanish literature.

The orientation toward community service is a practical goal for effectively improving all Chicano's lifestyles. The dissemination of information within the community promotes a cultural awareness which develops a much-needed new identity for young Chicanos and the reaffirmation of traditional beliefs for others. In this way, by realistically involving themselves with meeting needs of other Chicanos, the entire ethnic group's status is improved. This responsibility to the community is an added dimension which few if any higher educational programs can boast. There are problems which need attention and action in order to perpetuate these Chicano studies programs. University support in terms of funds, scholarships, financial aids and administrative backing is necessary to attract and retain more faculty and students. A critical evaluation of courses within the program can eliminate ineffective and support productive elements for achievement of the program's goals. In addition, there is a need for more Chicano models for freshman Chicanos to identify with and to inspire them to greater achievements. Upperclassmen, graduate students and successful alumni need to be active in the entire Chicano studies program; such a program is only one means of helping individual Chicanos improve their lifestyles, but it is an effective solution which can be built into existing systems. Until that happens, which the mirror of today is <u>not</u> reflecting, the Chicano will continue to struggle in an educational system which is not made for him and in which he is made to feel not welcome.

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